BOOKING KING'S KILLER

...Or Maybe Ayn Fleming?

Was the murderer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a man influenced by two characters in contemporary fiction—one a glorified individualist who hates society and the other an Ian Fleming arch villain?

The name of the man listed on the registration card of the white Mustang car linked to the slaying is "Eric Starvo Galt." The FBI has been unable to find anything to indicate that any such a person exists.

In Ayn Rand's 1957 novel, "Atlas Shrugged," the leader of a tiny minority of people described as able, creative and ultra-conservative is "John Galt." And in some of Ian Fleming's James Bond stories, the leading enemy of the status quo is called "Ernst Stavro Blofeld."

An artist's unofficial conception of Galt.

Ayn Rand's novel begins with the quote: "Who is John Galt?" but the character remains hidden from the reader for over half the book, at which time he appears and delivers a scorching denunciation of society that runs some 80 pages of monologue.

The literary "Galt" lives in the United States of the future in which the economy is mysteriously declining. Miss Rand's version is that the competent men of the world are vanishing while the greedy incompetents are taking over. The disappearance of the competent "objectivists" is part of their plot against the looters and parasites because the able men are convinced society must collapse before there can be a healthy social order.

To the fictional Galt, the looters are politicians, bureaucrats, self-styled intellectuals who are evil and must be destroyed. Galt denounces mysticism and glorifies reason. His gospel is abolition of the income tax, an end to foreign aid and of social welfare legislation. At the end, as Galt and his cohorts fly to their Atlantis they see New York writhing in its last convulsions.

Ernst Stavro Blofeld is the much-less philosophical villain of "Thunderball" and two other Fleming novels.

If the man who murdered King was influenced by the views of the fictional characters, or even just concocted an alias from a combination of the names, an investigator might draw the conclusion that the fugitive is a man of some education or affinity for reading. Persons who claim to have seen the suspect, before and after the April 4 assassination, describe him as neatly dressed and well-spoken.

There is some speculation that he is a professional killer, rather than an "amateur." But federal investigators studying the minute details of the case say there is no reason to put more credence in one idea than the other.

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